

# SR Books

## Failed Patriots

Inside the Company:  
CIA Diary

by Philip Agee  
Stonehill, 639 pp., \$9.95

Reviewed by Harrison E. Salisbury

So much has been written about the CIA in recent months that it is time to pause a moment and reflect on precisely what the Central Intelligence Agency is and how it got that way. There is a lesson in the origins and evolution of CIA that we must absorb if we are ever to cope with the critical problem it now presents. There is no point rushing into half-measures to try to "curb" the CIA if we do not comprehend the fundamentals of the problem. In this task, Philip Agee's comprehensive, often tedious, prolix, thoughtful, and remarkably illuminating study can be of great assistance.

CIA, it should be firmly stated, was not founded by evil men. It was not created as some kind of dark conspiracy to subvert American democracy. Quite the contrary, it was established by brilliant, intelligent, patriotic Americans who had accumulated substantial experience in intelligence and covert operations during World War II. Today's scandal is rooted in this very circumstance—the founding of the agency by men who won their spurs pulling off incredibly daring parachute entries into Norway, spirited valuable scientists out of Nazi-occupied Europe, filching Nazi secrets out of the Wilhelmstrasse, and enlisting eccentric nationalists like Ho Chi Minh in the Allied war effort. The objective of these men, founders of the

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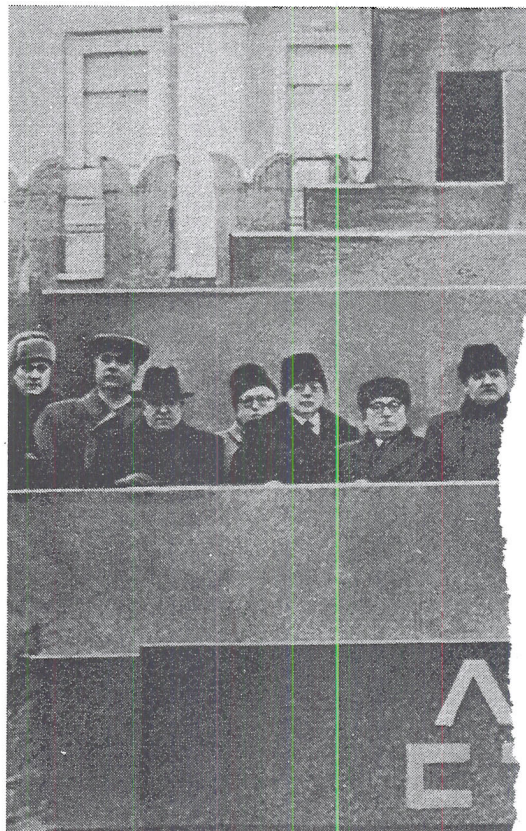
romantic, quixotic, remarkably successful OSS during World War II, was a simple one: to defeat the enemy—Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, jingoist Japan. In war anything goes: the dirty trick, the criminal deceit, blackmail, torture, brute force.

When CIA was established in 1947, its basic cadres and leadership came almost intact from OSS. These men saw their objective in 1941 terms. Only now the enemy was the Soviet Union. It was not yet hot war, but the Cold War was far advanced. The Soviet Union and its presumed allies, Communists and Communist states wherever they might be, were an enemy precisely as deadly as Nazi Germany. Maybe more so.

When their task is conceived in these terms, what was more natural than that these clever, sophisticated, often unconventional men should seek to fight fire with fire? They knew, or thought they knew, a great deal about the Russians and the operations of their covert agencies and intelligence branches. The men of CIA set out to create an operation that could fight fire with fire—meet the Soviet intelligence networks, the KGB, and all the others on their own terms. If KGB bribed and subverted, so would CIA. If KGB had its execution teams, so would CIA. If KGB infiltrated democratic institutions, CIA would infiltrate Communist institutions. If KGB set up false-front organizations, so would CIA.

One has only to flip through the pages of Agee's book—only now released in this country because of earlier fears of CIA legal action—to see how successful CIA was in creating a mirror image of the Russian intelligence forces. In country after country, CIA penetrated the power structure of the local government, staged or encouraged coups d'état to put "reliable" men into power, bribed the press, falsified the news, manipulated local politicians, subverted elections.

And all of this, CIA and its leaders thought, was good. It was protecting America, protecting democracy, holding back the red wave of subversive Com-



Keystone Press

KGB bigwigs (and others) at Lenin's tomb

unist plotting that threatened to end our way of life. These words are clichés. The goal and thought of CIA was not. If the law had to be bent, if dirty hands had to be used, if scurrilous schemes had to be invented—these were all means to a noble end: the survival of the United States and the confusion of its enemies.

How THIS WAS DONE Agee details in page after page. He was a lower-echelon agent working in Latin America, but reading his account one soon realizes that it makes no difference which country he happened to be working in, because the story was always the same: be alert against any manifestation from the Left; support the military and the dictators, for they are the only persons upon whom we can really rely—they can be bought and will stay bought.

Slowly the terrible truth begins to emerge: the men who fought KGB not only imitated and improved upon its methods; they began to *think* like KGB. Only in Russia, and only among the most hard-line Stalinists, have I heard the kind of reasoning that CIA employed to justify its terrible means. A process that only an Ionesco could depict began to occur. The loyal, thought-



in the Fifties—CIA men began to look and act like their Russian counterparts.

ful, patriotic men of CIA began to look and act more and more like their counterparts—the ogres of KGB.

Gradually, even the goal of CIA began to disappear in the mirage of bureaucratic momentum. Its life as an ongoing institution became more important than the activities in which it was nominally engaged.

CIA did not really notice that thanks to its efforts America's "friends" around the world more and more became the antithesis of democracy—the military dictators of the Middle East; the purchasable colonels of Latin America; the Francos, the Salazars, the Shahs, the Chiang Kai-sheks, the shabby rulers of South Korea and South Vietnam. Without noticing, the CIA became more and more distrustful of the essentials of democracy—free choice, free speech, the democratic process. Our allies in Western Europe began to arouse concern. Were they really safe? What if a left-wing government came to power in France? Who could say whether the British Labor Party was *really* secure?

As Agee notes—and the point can be stressed again and again—the CIA by its charter is not an independent agency. It is an arm of the President. It can un-

dertake *nothing* on its own. It is a secret pair of eyes, an extra daring pair of arms for the White House. It is the President's instrument, nothing more nor less. Congress from the beginning abdicated its responsibility to oversee, and that is the way the CIA wanted it and still wants it.

THE PRESIDENT, whoever he may be, thus cannot escape responsibility for CIA. If CIA murdered foreign leaders or plotted to murder them or provided

logistics to murder them, the responsibility is the President's. The CIA is pre-eminently "The President's Men." They have no life or responsibility of their own.

The CIA policy of supporting corrupt, rotten, dictatorial, anti-democratic elements has now come home to roost. By aiding the suppression of normal political give-and-take and of normal growth in the political process, and by suppressing wherever possible any manifestations from the Left or procedures leading to social change, the CIA has created a situation in which violent change and violent revolution become almost inevitable in the "backward" countries of the world. If the lid is slammed shut on the pot too long, the pot will eventually explode. And this is precisely what CIA has brought about.

This situation can obviously not be cured by a new congressional "oversight" committee nor by any number of Rockefeller investigations. It can be cured only if Congress and the President comprehend that CIA must be their joint instrument in the furtherance of American policy, and if both work hand in hand to lay down guidelines which ensure that in fighting communism CIA does not succeed in destroying democracy at home as well as abroad. □

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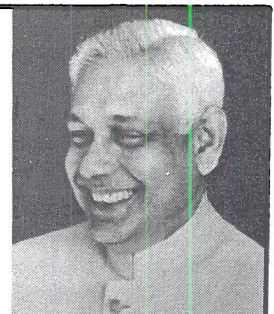
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